

Security, and I want to remind all of us today that Social Security and Medicare did not create the national debt, and that is really unconscionable to ask our most vulnerable communities to be the ones who must bear the burden of balancing our budget.

It was the Republicans who told us that the financial markets would regulate themselves. In return, what did we get? The financial crisis.

It's the Republican politicians who keep telling us that tax cuts pay for themselves and create jobs. In return, we have a huge deficit and an unacceptable unemployment rate. And it was Republicans who told us that we could fight two wars while giving more tax breaks to their rich friends.

Of course, Congresswoman WOOLSEY for years and years and years had reminded us that, first of all, the wars did not need to be fought, but, secondly, they were morally and fiscally wrong. In return, now we will end up paying a cost of nearly \$6 trillion by borrowing the money and adding this to the tally of our Nation's debt.

Now, unfortunately, Republicans are blaming their debts on the most vulnerable Americans. Even now they continue to drive our Nation closer and closer to the brink of disaster just to protect massive tax breaks for billionaires.

So once again, in closing, I am proud to stand here with Congresswoman WOOLSEY as a member of the triad. She is working to end our Nation's wars and will continue to do so to promote national security and to protect our seniors and our children, our working families and the most vulnerable Americans.

Thank you. We owe you, Congresswoman WOOLSEY, a debt of gratitude.

AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Madam Speaker, on the floor today I think America and all of us in Congress are certainly concerned about the debt ceiling issue and what we are going to do and how we are going to be able to resolve it. But like many of my colleagues on the Democratic side, I am here today to talk about the war in Afghanistan.

Madam Speaker, I have beside me a really profound photograph of a wife in tears and a little girl sitting on her knee, who is too young to understand that her father, United States Army Sergeant Jeffrey Sherer, is laid under the flag that is now folded, being presented to the wife.

This is the pain of war, and I do say to Ms. WOOLSEY, thank you very much for what you have done to try to wake up the Congress and the American people.

Ten billion dollars a month going to Afghanistan. We can't even fix the bridges, we can't fix the roads, we are

cutting children's programs, we are cutting senior programs. And yet Mr. Karzai, who is known as a corrupt leader of Afghanistan, is going to get his \$10 billion a month while these programs that we are going to cut are going to be denied \$10 billion a month. It doesn't make any sense, Madam Speaker.

That brings me to an article written by A.C. Snow. He is well-known in North Carolina, where I am from, for his writings in *The News and Observer*, which is a State paper in Raleigh, North Carolina. This past July 4th, his article was titled "Time to Bring Them Home, Let Them Live."

"Time to Bring Them Home, Let Them Live."

Let this little girl's father live. Obviously, he will not live. He's dead. But how about the next little girl or little boy, or the wife and, in some cases, the husband?

Let me share with the House from A.C. Snow's writing, "Time to Bring Them Home, Let Them Live":

"It seems we never run out of wars. It is as if one small country after another sends out engraved invitations reading: 'We're having a war. Please come.' And Uncle Sam goes, lugging borrowed billions and thousands of young men and women to sacrifice on the altar of so-called freedom or 'nation building.'"

Snow closes his comments by quoting lyrics from "Les Miserables": "He is young. He is only a boy. You can take, you can give, Let him be, Let him live. Bring him home, Bring him home."

Snow further writes, "It's way past time to stop playing politics with the lives of America's youth. Bring them home. Let them live. Not just 30,000 of them. All of them."

Madam Speaker, I sit here day after day, in committees and on the floor of the House, listening to debate, sometimes being part of the debate. I just hope that the American people will understand that in this discussion at the White House with the leadership of the House and the leadership of the Senate, we could save \$100 billion. That's what it costs per year to be in Afghanistan.

Madam Speaker, I have Camp Lejeune Marine Base in my district. I have over 60,000 retired military. I listen to them. No, I did not serve, but I listen to those who are serving and those who did serve.

And like my colleagues, I go to Walter Reed, I go to Bethesda. I see the broken bodies, the amputated legs, the paralyzed; and I have written over 10,300 letters to families like Sergeant Sherer's to say to the families, I regret that I voted to send our kids into Iraq. It was a lie that got us there, and we never should have gone.

So I join my colleagues in both parties to do my part to say let's bring them home from Afghanistan. Let's bring them home before 2014 or 2015.

And, Madam Speaker, may God bless our men and women in uniform, and may God bless America.

FICTITIOUS DEBT CEILING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. HIMES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HIMES. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my Republican colleague from North Carolina for that very powerful statement, and I am very glad that Congresswoman WOOLSEY was in the Chamber to hear that, Congresswoman WOOLSEY who has worked so hard to remind us of the terrible consequences of war.

I often sit here as we debate and seize from time to time at the statements of Republican colleagues, but that was profoundly moving, and I thank the gentleman from North Carolina.

I stand today, Madam Speaker, to talk on another issue that should unite our parties, and that is the fundamental question about whether or not the United States honors its commitments.

□ 1050

Today is July 12, exactly 3 weeks before August 2. August 2 is the date at which this government can no longer honor its commitments, at which time it will be forced to choose between paying those soldiers that we heard so movingly described and sending out Social Security checks, running a court system, paying Social Security and Medicare. Do we honor our commitments in the United States of America? I would think that both parties would say "yes" to that question. The Treasury Secretary, CEOs of American corporations and economist after economist have told us, Do not play around with the debt ceiling.

What is this debt ceiling, by the way, that is putting into peril the question of whether we honor our commitments? The debt ceiling is a pernicious fiction. It is a fiction that was put in place by this body decades ago to try to convince the American people that we could control our debts. And since then, it has never done that. It has been raised dozens of times as this body took the spending decisions and the tax cut decisions that required borrowing.

Under the Bush administration, the debt ceiling was raised seven times. Dozens and dozens of times, the debt ceiling has been raised. It is a fiction. It is a particularly pernicious set of smoke and mirrors that this institution uses to make people feel better while the debt rises, as it did under President Reagan, as it did under the first President Bush, as it did not under President Clinton, and as it did under President George W. Bush and President Obama.

So now the question is, do we honor the commitments made historically in this Chamber? We raise the debt ceiling not to spend more new money, to start new programs or to cut new taxes, but because we honor the commitments that were made in this Chamber to cut taxes in '01 and '03, to go to war twice in the last decade and